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THE FOUNDATION OF Moral Goodneſs:

OR A Further Inquiry INTO THE ORIGINAL OF OUR IDEA of VIRTUE.

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By a CLERGYMAN.

Est quidem vera lex, recta ratio naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna.——

CICERO.

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The Foundation of Moral Goodneſs, &c.

THE ingenious Author of *the Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, has written both his Books with ſo good a Deſign, is every where ſo inſtructive, or entertaining, and diſcovers upon all Occaſions ſuch a Fund of Good-Nature, as well as Good Senſe; that I find my ſelf much more inclined to join with the Publick in his juſt Praiſe, than offer any Objections againſt his Performances. And indeed it is not without pain, that I attempt to point out ſome Particulars wherein I apprehend he has erred. I ſhould ſcarce content my ſelf with the old Excuſe of *magis amica Veritas*, if the Miſtakes which I think he has committed, did not ap-

pear to be of the utmoſt Conſequence: if they did not lie at the Foundations of Morality, and like Failures in Ground-work, affect the whole Building.——To enquire what it is that originally conſtitutes *Virtue*, or *Moral Goodneſs*, and whence ariſes that univerſal *Approbation* which it meets with from rational Beings; are undoubtedly Speculations of very great moment. It may be juſtly queſtioned whether any more important can enter into the Mind of Man. The deeper we ſearch into the Nature of Virtue, if we ſearch with Succeſs, the more excellent and more amiable we ſhall find it. We ſhould therefore conſider this matter with our utmoſt Attention, and carefully examine ſuch Queſtions as may ariſe concerning it. Our Author is ſo ſenſible of this, that I am confident it will give him no diſturbance, to find any of his Sentiments on this Subject examined, or even oppoſed; provided it be done ſeriouſly, and with that Decency and Moderation of which he has ſet ſo good an Example.

Among the ſeveral Notions of Morality which have been advanced, our Author obſerves * that *there are two Opinions entirely oppoſite,——both intelligible, each conſiſtent with it ſelf. That the one ſeems not to repreſent Human Nature as it is, and that the other ſeems to do it.———The former of theſe Opinions is, that all Actions flow from*

* *Illuſtrations*, P. 207, 211.

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the Proſpect of private Happineſs, of ſome kind or other, *as the ſole Motive of Election. That, in like manner, what determines any Agent to approve his own Action, is its Tendency to his private Happineſs. And that the Approbation of the Action of another, is from an Opinion of its Tendency to the Happineſs of the Approver, either immediately, or more remotely.*

This Scheme our Author, with great Reaſon, rejects; as diſhonourable to Human Nature, and injurious to the Cauſe of Virtue. He juſtly obſerves, that *it can never account for the principal Actions of human Life; ſuch as the Offices of Friendſhip, Gratitude, natural Affection, Generoſity, publick Spirit, Compaſſion.* And tho' I cannot ſo far agree with him, as to conclude that no Actions can be morally good, which are ſolely directed to private Intereſt; yet I think it very evident that ſuch a Suppoſition is utterly inconſiſtent with *Social* Virtue; as he has clearly and inconteſtably proved.

And this is, in part, the other Opinion which he lays down in oppoſition to the former. He repreſents it thus in one of the Pages referred to before: viz. *That we have not only Self-Love, but benevolent Affections alſo towards others in various Degrees; making us deſire their Happineſs as an ultimate End, without any View to private Happineſs. That we have a Moral Senſe, or Determination of our Mind,*

Mind, to approve every kind Affection either in our ſelves, or others; and all publickly uſeful Actions, which we imagine do flow from ſuch Affection; without our having a View to our private Happineſs, in our Approbation of theſe Actions.——In order to apprehend rightly our Author's Scheme, it will be neceſſary to compare this Paſſage with what he has laid down elſewhere. * *Every Action*, ſays he, *which we apprehend as morally good or evil, is always ſuppoſed to flow from ſome Affection towards* † *Rational Agents. And whatever we call Virtue or Vice, is either ſome ſuch Affection, or ſome Action conſequent upon it.* He tells us in ‡ another Place, that *the true Spring of Virtue is ſome Determination of our Nature to ſtudy the Good of others; or ſome Inſtinct——which influences us to the Love of others; as the Moral Senſe determines us to approve the Actions which flow from this Love in our ſelves or others.*

Having given an account of theſe two oppoſite Opinions, he proceeds to take notice of other different Ideas of Virtue, as I conceive them to be; tho' he conſiders them only as || other Ways of ſpeaking, which ſeem to ſignify ſomething different. What theſe *Ways of ſpeaking* are, and whether they *ſignify ſomething* really,

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*Vol I. *Page* 136. ‡ Vol. I. *Page* 155. || Vol. II. *Page* 211.

† *Tho' only* Rational *Agents are here mentioned, yet it was not his Intention to exclude other ſenſitive Natures; as appears from his Explanations elſewhere.*

or only *ſeemingly different*, will appear afterwards. In the mean time I beg leave to conſider our Author's Scheme, which according to the Light wherein it appears to me, I can by no means approve.

That the Author of Nature has planted in our Minds *benevolent Affections towards others*, cannot be denied without contradicting Experience, and falſifying our own Perceptions. Whoever careſully reflects on what paſſes within his own Breaſt, may ſoon be convinced of this Truth, and even feel the Evidences of it. Nor can it be doubted but theſe *Affections* were given us, in order to engage, aſſiſt, and quicken us in a Courſe of virtuous Actions. They may be looked upon as Auxiliaries, aiding us in our Duty, and ſupporting and ſeconding our Reaſon and Reflection.—But from the Paſſages I have produced, and others of the like Nature, it plainly appears that our Author does not conſider this *Natural Affection*, or *Inſtinct*, merely as a Help or Incentive to Virtue; but as the true Ground and Foundation of it. He makes Virtue entirely to conſiſt in it, or flow from it.

I muſt confeſs my ſelf prejudiced, in ſome meaſure, againſt this Notion; and cannot forbear expreſſing my Hopes that it will not prove to be juſt. If the two *Inſtincts* of *Affection* and *Moral Senſe* be the only Pillars on which Moral Goodneſs reſts, how ſecure it may ſtand I know not; but am afraid its Honour, its Dignity,

Dignity, its Beauty will ſuffer in the eyes of a great part of the rational World. I am as unwilling as our Author can be, that *Virtue ſhould be looked upon as wholly artificial.* Let it by all means be repreſented as *Natural* to us. Let it take its Riſe, and flow unalterably from the Nature of Men and Things; and then it will appear not only *Natural*, but *Neceſſary*. I mean neceſſary in itſelf, tho' not in reſpect of its Votaries; as being the Object of their free Choice.—Let it be allowed that Virtue has a natural Right and Authority, antecedently to every *Inſtinct*, and every *Affection*, to preſcribe Laws to all Moral Agents; and let no Bounds be ſet to its Dominions. More particularly, let it reign without a Rival in every Human Mind; but let its Throne be erected in the higheſt * Part of our Nature: Let Truth and Right Reaſon be its immediate Supporters; and let our ſeveral Senſes, Inſtincts, Affections, and Intereſts, attend as miniſterial and ſubſervient to its ſacred purpoſes.—But inſtead of repreſenting this Matter to my Readers Imaginations, my buſineſs is to appeal to their Underſtandings. And in the

Firſt Place, it ſeems an inſuperable Difficulty in our Author's Scheme, that Virtue appears in it to be of an arbitrary and poſitive

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* *Virtus, ut omnes fatemur, altiſſimum locum in homine, & maxime excellentem tenet.* Cic. de Fin. Lib. 4.

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Nature; as entirely depending upon *Inſtincts*, that might originally have been otherwiſe, or even contrary to what they now are; and may at any time be alter'd, or inverted, if the Creator pleaſes. If our Affections conſtitute the *Honeſtum* of Morality, and do not preſuppoſe it; it is natural to ask, what it was that determined the Deity to plant in us theſe Affections rather than any other. This our Author anſwers by ſuppoſing a certain * *Diſpoſition eſſential to the Deity correſponding to the Affections he has given us.* As he alſo ſuppoſes ſomething *analogous* in the Deity *to our Moral Senſe.* By ſuch a *Diſpoſition* he imagines the Deity would naturally be inclined to give us the *kind Affections* in preference to any other. I ask then further, is ſuch a *Diſpoſition* a Perfection in the Deity, or is it not? Is it better than a contrary, or than any other Diſpoſition would have been? more worthy of his Nature, and more agreeable to his other Perfections? If it be not, let us not preſume to aſcribe it to him. Whatever is in the Deity muſt be abſolutely good, and *ſui generis* the very beſt. On the other hand, if this Diſpoſition be abſolutely good, and really better than any other; then the Queſtion will be, why, and upon what account it is ſo. Whatever

* *Illuſtrations*, Page 239. *and elſewhere.*

ſhall be aſſigned as the Ground or Reaſon of that Goodneſs, or Betterneſs; that we may ſecurely pitch upon as a proper Foundation for Virtue. If no Reaſon can be given why the Deity ſhould be *benevolently diſpoſed*, and yet we ſuppoſe him to be ſo; will it not follow, that he is influenced and acted by a blind, unaccountable Impulſe?——In matters perfectly indifferent, it is needleſs and abſurd to have recourſe to Mr. *Leibnitz*'s *Principle of a ſufficient Reaſon:* and where ſeveral Means equally conduce to a propoſed End, it is certainly indifferent which of them are choſen. But it can never be thought an indifferent Matter how the Deity is *diſpoſed* or *affected* towards his Creatures. Either therefore it muſt be concluded, that he is determined by the Reaſon of the Thing, and that this is the Ground of his Benevolence; or elſe it muſt be ſaid, that ſuch a Diſpoſition is *neceſſary* in the Deity. If the latter, I ask, in what ſenſe is it neceſſary? A *Moral Neceſſity* is manifeſtly nothing to the purpoſe. And if a *Phyſical* or natural *Neceſſity* be meant, that is utterly inconſiſtent with our Ideas of Goodneſs. As far as any Acts of Kindneſs are unchoſen and unavoidable, ſo far they are no Kindneſs at all, neither infer they are any Obligation. But of this more afterwards.

Our Author, in his *Enquiry into the original Idea of Virtue*, has made the following Ob-

Obſervation, * *That our firſt Ideas of Moral Good depend not on Laws, may plainly appear from our conſtant Enquiries into the Juſtice of Laws themſelves; and that not only of Human Laws, but alſo of the Divine. What elſe can be the meaning of that univerſal Opinion, that the Laws of God are juſt, and holy, and good?* Very right. But I wonder much this Sentiment ſhould not have led the Author to the true original Idea of Moral Goodneſs. For after we have made ſuch Enquiries, do we find reaſon to conclude, that any *Laws* are good, merely from their being conformable to the *Affections* of the Legiſlator? And in reſpect of the Divine Laws, what is it that convinces us that they are *juſt*, and *holy*, and *good?* Is it their Conformity to a certain *Diſpoſition* which we ſuppoſe in the Deity. On the contrary, is it not a Perception of the intrinſick Reaſonableneſs of them, and their Tendency to public Good? If we impartially conſult our Ideas, I am perſuaded we ſhall find that Moral Goodneſs no more depends originally on *Affections* and *Diſpoſitions*, than it does on *Laws*; and that there is ſomething in Actions, abſolutely good, antecedent to both.

2. Another Objection to our Author's Account of Moral Good, is, that according thereto, if God had not framed our Natures with

* Page 274.

ſuch a Propenſity, and given us this benevolent Inſtinct, we ſhould have been altogether incapable of Virtue; and notwithſtanding Intelligence, Reaſon, and Liberty, it would have been out of our power to perform one Action in any degree morally good. It is evident, that this is a direct Conſequence of his Notion; and how a Notion ſhould be true, that labours under ſuch a Conſequence as this, I cannot underſtand. Let it be ſuppoſed, that we had been formed deſtitute of *Natural Affection*; and more particularly, that we found in our Hearts no kind Inſtinct towards our Benefactors: would *Gratitude*, upon this ſuppoſition, have been abſolutely out of our power? Might we not nevertheleſs, by the help of Reaſon and Reflection, diſcover ourſelves to be under Obligations, and that we ought to return good Offices, or Thanks, according to our Abilities? If we did not, certainly it would be owing to great Inadvertency, and Abſence of Thought.——Or, ſuppoſing us void of *natural Compaſſion*, as well as *Benevolence*; might we not poſſibly be induced to attempt the Relief of a Perſon in Diſtreſs, merely from the *Reaſon* of the Thing, and the *Rectitude* of the Action? Might we not by conſidering the Nature of the Caſe, and the Circumſtances of the Sufferer, perceive ſome Fitneſs, ſome Reaſonableneſs in an Act of Succour? Might not ſome ſuch Maxim as that of doing as we would be done unto, offer it ſelf to our Minds,

and

and prevail with us to ſtretch out a helping hand upon ſuch an occaſion? In ſhort, if we made any uſe of our Underſtandings, they would not fail, I think, to diſcover our Duty in ſuch a caſe. Nay, they would prompt us to undertake it, and condemn us if we omitted it. He who now declines ſuch an Office, incurs the Imputation of Inhumanity, and Cruelty. And even upon the Suppoſition I am ſpeaking of, who would ſcruple to pronounce him unreaſonable and unjuſt? Conſidering the Frailties and Thoughtleſſneſs of Mankind, it is but too manifeſt that we ſtand in need of Inſtincts and Inclinations to prompt us to what is good, and ſtimulate us to our Duty: and good Reaſon there was, why we ſhould not be truſted to ourſelves, and the Dictates of our Reaſon, without them. But ſtill ſuch Virtues would ſurely have been practicable, tho' they might have been more rarely practiſed.——Whoever is led by Inſtinct to the performance of a good Action, follows the Biaſs of his Nature. What ſhall we ſay then of him who performs the ſame Action in obedience to the Reaſon of his own Mind? Is it not as *natural* for a *reaſonable* Creature to act *Reaſonably*, as for an *affectionate* one to act *Affectionately?* It ſhould be more ſo; becauſe tho' both Principles are natural, yet the former is greatly ſuperior, as being of a nobler and ſublimer kind. To repreſent a Rational Agent as incapable of performing or approving Actions morally good, with-

without preſuppoſing certain Inſtincts, ſeems to me inverting the Frame of our Nature, and transferring the Supremacy from the higheſt Principle to the loweſt.

3. Another Difficulty in our Author's Scheme, is, that it ſeems to expoſe him to the Neceſſity of allowing ſome Degree of Virtue to *Brutes*. When, in deſcribing a Moral Action, he directs and confines our Affections to *Rational* Objects; this Limitation, as I before took notice, appears to have been only caſual; foraſmuch as in other places he takes in all *Senſitive* Beings. And indeed, there is no reaſon to doubt, but Brutes, as they are capable of being treated by us either mercifully, or cruelly, may be the *Objects* either of Virtue or Vice. But the preſent Queſtion is, whether according to our Author's Account of Moral Good, they are not alſo in ſome meaſure *Subjects* of Virtue? For if Virtue be only kind *Inſtincts*, or *Affections*, or *Actions conſequent upon them*; how ſhall we be able to diſprove or deny the Virtue of Brutes? They purſue the Inſtincts and Impulſes of Nature more ſteadily and regularly than Men. They ſhew * Affection to their reſpective Kinds, and a ſtrong Degree of Love and Tenderneſs towards their Offſpring. And

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* *Quod ſi hoc apparet in beſtiis, primum ut ſe diligant ipſæ, deinde ut requirant atque appetant, ad quas ſe applicent, ejuſdem generis animantes: idque faciunt cum deſiderio, & cum quadam ſimilitudine amoris humani.* Cic. de Amicit.

if

ſif a Perception, or a Conſciouſneſs of the Reaſonableneſs of Actions, be not required to conſtitute thoſe Actions virtuous; what is there wanting to render many of theirs truly ſuch? ——If it be alledged, that they know not what they do; and that they are neither capable of intending Good, nor ſenſible of any Effects of their Love; my Anſwer is, that they have kind Affections, and ſuitable Actions; which is our Author's Idea of Virtue. Beſides, I cannot allow all thoſe Suppoſitions to paſs for Facts, till ſome Proof appear. In the mean while, it ſeems to me, that theſe Creatures Incapacity for Morals, is to be aſcribed chiefly, and perhaps wholly to their utter Ignorance of the Reaſons and Relations of things: From whence it may juſtly be concluded, that whatever Ideas they may have of *Natural* Good, they can have none of *Moral*.

4. Another Argument againſt our Author's Origine of Virtue, is, that if Virtue conſiſt in kind Affections, then the ſtronger thoſe Affections, the greater the Virtue. I preſume this Conſequence is very clear; and yet, if I miſtake not, it is both contrary to Fact, and to our Author's own Declarations. He tells * us that *in equal Moments of Good produced by two Agents, when one acts from a general Benevolence, the other from a nearer Tye*;

* Vol. I. Page 292.

there

there is greater Virtue in the Agent, who produces greater Good from the weaker Attachment.——Thus in cooperating with Gratitude, Natural Affection, or Friendſhip, we evidence leſs Virtue in any given Moment of Good produced, than in equally important Actions of general Benevolence. From hence, I think, it follows, that if *equal Good* were ſuppoſed to be *produced by an Agent* without any Affection or *Attachment* at all, his *Virtue* would ſtill be *greater* in the ſame Proportion. How then ſhould that be the true Ground or Principle of Virtue, by the total Abſence of which, Virtue is mightily encreaſed, and which leſſens it, when preſent, in proportion to the Degree of its own Strength and Influence? How to reconcile the foregoing Paſſage with the Author's Idea of Virtue, I muſt confeſs my ſelf at a loſs.——However, the Paſſage ſeems to me to contain nothing but what is evidently true. An Act of Kindneſs done to a *Child*, or a dear *Friend*, is certainly leſs Virtue than doing the ſame to a *Stranger*. And what can be the Reaſon of it? Are not the Actions equally reaſonable; or rather, is not the former more reaſonable than the latter? Why then leſs virtuous? Becauſe the Impulſe is ſo ſtrong, as to ſuperſede Reflection, and over-rule, in a great meaſure, the Freedom of Choice. To be determined to the doing of a good Action, merely by the Reaſon and Right of the Thing, is genuine Goodneſs. This is the pureſt and moſt

perfect Virtue of which any Agent is capable. As far as we are influenced by Inſtincts and Affections, ſo much is to be diſcounted in the Eſtimate of our Beneficence; as I ſhall ſoon have further Occaſion to obſerve. On the other hand, the ſtronger the Inſtinct, the more vicious is the Violation of it; as our Author takes Notice. A barbarous Action committed againſt a Child, or a Friend, is vaſtly more criminal than againſt a Stranger: as in this Caſe a Man breaks through much ſtronger Tyes and Obligations, and ſhamefully counteracts both Reaſon and Affection in their utmoſt Force.

But to proceed; let us hear what Reaſon our Author gives for thoſe *Actions appearing leſs amiable, which flow from the nearer Attachments of Nature.* He tells† us the Reaſon is plainly this: *Theſe ſtrong Inſtincts are by Nature limited to ſmall Numbers of Mankind.* ——As I do not apprehend this to be the right Reaſon, ſo neither do I think it affords any Solution of the forementioned Difficulty. For however a general Affection may be preferable to a limited and partial one; yet certainly according to our Author's Scheme, the Degree of an Agent's Virtue muſt depend upon the *Strength* of his Affections, as well as the *Extent* and Diffuſiveneſs of them. If Virtue conſiſt only in Affection, and the Effects it pro-

† Vol. *Page* 181.

duces, this Conſequence is unavoidable.—Suppoſing then that Men had the ſame Degree of *natural Affection* for their whole *Species*, that they have now for their *Offſpring*; I ask, whether would this *encreaſe* or *diminiſh* the Virtue and Merit of their good Offices? If it be ſaid, that it would *diminiſh* the Virtue of them; how is that to be reconciled with our Author's Opinion, who derives all Virtue from Affection, and makes it entirely conſiſt in it? If it be ſaid that it would *encreaſe* it; how is that conſiſtent either with the forecited Paſſages, or the Truth of the Caſe? Not with thoſe Paſſages; becauſe Actions are there repreſented as *leſs Virtuous*, when flowing from *near Attachments*, or ſtrong Affections. Not with the Truth of the Caſe; becauſe upon this Suppoſition, Univerſal Kindneſs would be almoſt unavoidable, while little or no room was left for the Influence of Reaſon.——And this I take to be the true Cauſe, why Parental Kindneſs is leſs meritorious, and leſs virtuous than other Species of Benevolence. For in this Caſe the Inſtincts and Impulſes of Nature are generally ſo ſtrong, as to lay a kind of Conſtraint upon Parents, and engage them almoſt irreſiſtibly in a Series of good Offices. Their Virtue therefore is diminiſhed in proportion to the Strength of this Natural Biaſs, and the Weight that is laid upon their Wills. And ſo it would be in reſpect of *general Benevolence*, upon the foregoing Suppoſition. On the contrary,

ſuppoſing the στοργὴ, or *Natural Affection* ſuſpended, or taken off; the Virtue of thoſe Parents, who nevertheleſs diſcharged their Duty, would be exceedingly encreaſed.—However we cannot but acknowledge and admire the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the Creator, in not truſting to the Reflection of frail Man, for the Performance of ſo neceſſary a Duty. It is much better that the Balance of Natural Affection be too ſtrong, as we commonly find it is, than that helpleſs Infants ſhould be committed to the Care of *unaffectionate* Parents.

But to return; in order to be ſatisfied of the Truth of the foregoing Obſervation, let us imagine the Head of ſome numerous Family, large enough for a little Colony, carrying them away with him into ſome remote and deſolate Iſland; and there forming a petty Principality. His Care in enacting good Laws, and executing them faithfully and prudently; his indefatigable Endeavours to promote the Welfare of his Deſcendants; and his governing them with all the Mildneſs, Gentleneſs, and Clemency, that were conſiſtent with an orderly Adminiſtration; would doubtleſs be laudable and virtuous.—— But let us imagine another Legiſlator, preſiding over an equal Number of People, where there was no ſuch *near Attachment* of Nature, no Tye of Conſanguinity; and yet ruling with equal Care, Prudence, Gentleneſs, and Moderation: whether of theſe Characters would appear more amiable, and deſerving? Whether

ſhould we more approve, and admire? In the former Caſe, a great Share of the Merit would be placed to the Account of *Natural Affection*, commonly ſo called. In the latter, excepting the *weaker Attachment* of common *Humanity*, we diſcover nothing but pure Virtue, and a Senſe of Honour and Duty. For as to external Motives, I ſuppoſe them equal in both Caſes. —And if inſtead of ſmall Governments, large and populous Kingdoms could have been ſuppoſed thus circumſtantiated; the different Merit of the Legiſlators would ſtill have appeared in the ſame Light. From whence we may juſtly conclude, that the true Reaſon why *Parental*, or any other *Benevolence* that flows from the *near Attachments* of Nature, appears leſs amiable and virtuous; is not *its being limited to ſmall Numbers of Mankind*, as our Author has repreſented it. What appears to me the juſt and right way of accounting for it, has been already obſerved, and need not here be repeated.

5. Laſtly, it may deſerve to be conſidered, tho' I have touched upon it already, how much Virtue is depreciated and diſhonoured by ſo ignoble an Original. In our Author's Scheme it is reſolved ultimately into mere *Inſtinct*, and made to conſiſt in it. And even that univerſal Approbation which it meets with from Intelligent Creatures, is aſcribed to a certain *Senſe*, and made to depend wholly on it. Now if *Virtue* and the *Approbation* of Virtue be merely

inſtinctive;

inſtinctive; we muſt certainly think leſs highly and leſs honourably of it, than we ſhould do if we looked upon it as *Rational.* For I ſuppoſe it will readily be allowed, that *Reaſon* is the nobler Principle. It is therefore to be wiſhed, that it may be found to have the firſt and chief Place in the *Original Idea of Virtue.* And the Excluſion of it muſt, I think, be a Diſparagement to both.—*Some will not allow*, our Author* tells us, *any Merit in Actions flowing from kind Inſtincts; the Operation of which, they ſay, is not voluntary, but neceſſary.* Has our Author any where denied their operating in this Manner? Or has he attempted to ſhew, they may produce meritorious Actions, notwithſtanding ſuch a Manner of Operation? I cannot find that he has done either. And indeed it ſeems utterly impoſſible to reconcile *Virtue* with any kind of *Neceſſity.* As far as any Actions ſpring from a neceſſary Principle, ſo far they muſt be, in a Moral Senſe, worthleſs. If it be ſaid, that Inſtincts do not *force* the Mind, but only *incline* it; I anſwer, that as much room as they leave for the Uſe of Liberty, and the Exerciſe of Reaſon, ſo much room they leave for Virtue. But then this Virtue conſiſts in a *Rational Determination*, and not in a blind Purſuit of the *Inſtinct.* What he objects to this, will be conſidered in its proper Place. In the mean time,

* *Illuſtrat.* Sect. 5.

to

to his Query concerning the Meaning of the Words *Merit* or *Praiſe-worthyneſs*; I anſwer, that *they denote the Quality in Actions which* not only *gains the Approbation of the Obſerver*, but which alſo *deſerves* or is *worthy* of it *. *Approbation* does not conſtitute *Merit*, but is produced by it: is not the Cauſe of it, but the Effect. An Agent might be meritorious, tho' it were in the power of all other Beings to withhold their Approbation. He might deſerve their Praiſe, tho' we ſuppoſed him at the ſame time under an univerſal Cenſure. Notwithſtanding all that our Author has alledged in behalf of *Inſtincts*, I think it appears, even from what has been already ſaid, that they are ſo far from conſtituting *Virtue* or Moral Goodneſs; that, other Things being equal, we always account thoſe Actions moſt virtuous, which have the leaſt Dependance upon Inſtincts. And tho', in ſome Senſe, we approve of thoſe Actions which flow from Inſtincts; yet there are others which we approve much more; as flowing from a ſuperior Principle, and meriting our Approbation, in themſelves, and upon their own Account.

I ſhall now proceed to conſider the other of the two Inſtincts, which our Author has offer'd for the ſupport of Morality; *viz.* the *Moral Senſe*, the Object of which ſeems to me not

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* *Etiam ſi à nullo laudetur, natura eſſe laudàbile.* Cic. de Off. *L.* 1.

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ſufficiently ſpecified.—*Virtue*, or Moral Goodneſs may be conſidered either under the Notion of * *Pulchrum*, or *Honeſtum*. As to the *Pulchrum*, or *Beauty* of Virtue, it ſeems to me ſomewhat doubtful, and difficult to determine, whether the *Underſtanding* alone be ſufficient for the Perception of it; or whether it be not neceſſary to ſuppoſe ſome diſtinct Power ſuperadded for that purpoſe. It ſhould ſeem indeed, as an ingenious Writer has obſerved †, that our Faculty of Underſtanding is, of itſelf, ſufficient for ſuch a Perception; that the *Beauty* of Virtue inſeparably and neceſſarily adheres to the *Ideas* themſelves; which, *whenever preſented to the Mind, appear invariably the ſame*, always amiable, and always beautiful. But when I conſider, what perhaps is the Caſe in fact, that Perceptions of the *pulchrum*, and of the *honeſtum*, ſeem not equally univerſal; or if univerſal, yet in very different degrees; that while every rational Creature clearly and uniformly perceives, in all ordinary caſes, what is *fit*, and *juſt*, and *right*; many Men have little or no Perception of that *Beauty* in Actions, with which others are wonderfully charmed: And when I further conſider, that ſome Actions appear to all Men more *beautiful* than others, tho' equally *right* and *fit*; as in

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* *Hoc decorum quidem eſt totum cum virtute confuſum, ſed mente & cogitatione diſtinguitur.* Cic. ibid.

† *Letter in the* London Journal, Numb. 450.

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the Caſe of *Social* and *Self-Duties*; I find myſelf obliged to ſuſpend, and to wait for further Evidence.—Eſpecially in reſpect of the *Pleaſure* reſulting from ſuch Perceptions. For however *Ideas*, *beautiful* in themſelves, may be *ſeen* by the Underſtanding; yet Pleaſure is not ſeen, but *felt*; and therefore ſeems to be an Object of ſome other Faculty than that which we are uſed to conſider as merely *viſive*. If the pureſt Pleaſures be *Senſations*, of ſome kind or other; the Mind in receiving them, muſt be looked upon, not as *intelligent*, but *ſenſible*. And indeed, *Senſibility* ſeems to be as diſtinct from the *Underſtanding*, as the *Underſtanding* is from the *Will*. We ſhould not therefore confound them in our Conceptions.

But this is a Speculation ſomewhat foreign to my preſent purpoſe. It was not the *Beauty* of *Virtue*, or the *Pleaſure* ariſing from the Perception of it, that I propoſed to inquire into. My Intention was only to conſider the Nature, and ſearch for the Origine of *Moral Rectitude*. For the Perception of this, I preſume it will appear, that the Faculty of Underſtanding is altogether ſufficient, without the intervention of our Author's *Moral Senſe*. But before I enter into that Matter, it may be proper to conſider, how improbable it is, that our Perceptions of *Right* and *Wrong*, and the *Approbation* or *Diſapprobation* conſequent thereupon, ſhould depend on ſuch a *Senſe*, or *Inſtinct*, as he has advanced for that purpoſe.

And

And here I ſhall only need to obſerve, that this Opinion is liable to the very ſame Objections, and labours under the ſame Difficulties with the former.——Thus, as deriving Virtue merely from natural *Affection*, implies it to be of an arbitrary and changeable Nature; our judging and approving of it by a *Moral Senſe* implies the ſame: foraſmuch as this *Senſe*, as well as that *Affection*, might poſſibly have been quite contrary to what it is at preſent; or may be alter'd at any time hereafter. Accordingly our Author grants, * *There is nothing in this ſurpaſſing the natural Power of the Deity.* But I humbly apprehend he is miſtaken; and that it is no more in the power of the Deity to make Rational Beings *approve of Ingratitude*, *Perfidiouſneſs*, &c. than it is in his power to make them conclude, that *a Part of any thing is equal to the Whole.*—— In like manner, as according to our Author's Scheme, we ſhould have been utterly incapable of *Virtue* without *Natural Affection*; ſo without a *Moral Senſe*, we could never have *approved* of it; nor ever have had any Idea at all of Moral Goodneſs: ſo that in this reſpect, our Underſtandings would have been entirely uſeleſs. As if intelligent Creatures could not, as ſuch, perceive the moſt obvious Relations, and judge of a plain *Action*, as

* Vol. I. Page 302, *and elſewhere.*

well as a plain *Truth!* ——Again, as it ſeems to follow from our Author's Idea of Virtue, that Brutes may be in ſome degree capable of practiſing it; ſo upon the ſame ſuppoſition of a *Moral Senſe*, why may they not, in ſome meaſure, *approve* of ſuch a Practice? It is not to be doubted but they are ſenſible of Pleaſure, in the exerciſe of their natural Affections. Suppoſing them then endued with a *Moral Senſe*, or ſomething correſponding thereto; why might they not ſee with Complacency others of their own Species exerciſing and exerting the ſame Affections? And indeed, if the Reaſons and Relations of things are out of the Queſtion, and this *Moral Senſe* means no more than a natural Determination to receive agreeable or diſagreeable Ideas of certain Actions; I think it will be very difficult to prove Brutes incapable of ſuch a Senſe.——Thus again, as I think it follows from our Author's Notion, that the ſtronger Men's *Affections* are, the greater muſt be their *Virtue*; ſo it may be concluded, that the ſtronger and quicker their *Moral Senſe* is, the higher muſt their *Approbation* of virtuous Actions riſe. Let the Perceptions of *Beauty*, and the *Pleaſure* which attends them, be ſuppoſed as different, and various, as the Author thinks fit. But to make the *Rectitude* of Moral Actions dependant upon *Inſtinct*, and in proportion to the Warmth and Strength of the *Moral Senſe*, riſe and fall, like Spirits in a Thermometer; is de-

depretiating the moſt ſacred thing in the World, and almoſt expoſing it to Ridicule. I believe no Man living is further from ſuch an Intention than our Author. But I am obliged to examine his Opinion, as if it was not his. If what I have now obſerved be not a real Conſequence from it, I muſt be anſwerable for the Miſtake. But if it be, as I preſume it is, it ſeems heavy enough to ſink any Opinion in the World. It might as well be ſaid, that eternal and neceſſary Truths may be altered and diverſified, encreaſed or leſſened by the difference of Men's Underſtandings; as that Virtue or Moral Rectitude ſhould be capable of ſuch a Variation. It can receive no Change, no Alteration any way; much leſs in Conſequence of a *Senſe*, or an *Inſtinct*.——Laſtly, as I took notice how Virtue was diſhonoured by ſo ignoble an Original as that of Inſtinct, ſo the ſame Obſervation may be applied to the Notion of a *Moral Senſe*: with this addition, that at the ſame time that it depretiates Virtue, it alſo debaſes the Faculty of Reaſon. The former it does by aſcribing to a blind Impulſe that Approbation which Virtue eternally claims in its own Right. The latter, by repreſenting our Underſtandings as incapable, and inſufficient of themſelves, to judge and approve of it. And what can be more diſparaging to Reaſon, than to deny it a power of diſtinguiſhing, in the moſt ordinary caſes, between Right and Wrong, Good and Evil? Suppoſe a Man deprived of what our

Author calls the *Moral Senſe*; and according to his Hypotheſis, whatever Reaſon and Philoſophy the Man may be poſſeſs'd of, the Characters of *Antoninus* and *Caligula*, of *Socrates* and *Apicius*, ſhall appear to him in the ſame light, and their Conduct equally praiſe-worthy; or rather equally indifferent: Than which I cannot eaſily imagine a more ſhocking Abſurdity.

Thus, I think, it appears that our Author's Opinions concerning the two Inſtincts of *Affection* and *Moral Senſe*, ſtand equally expoſed to the ſame Objections. From whence we may obſerve how nicely they are match'd, and how exactly they tally to each other.—— Let us then ſeek out for ſome *other Original of our Ideas*, and inquire whether *Virtue*, or *Moral Goodneſs* do not ſtand on a ſurer and nobler Foundation. Perhaps we may find it independant of all *Inſtincts*, neceſſarily fixed, and immoveably rooted in the Nature of Things. And perhaps alſo we may find *Reaſon*, or *Intelligence*, a proper Faculty to perceive and judge of it, without the aſſiſtance of any adventitious Power. Only let it be remembered, that it is not the *Beauty*, or *Pleaſure*, but only the *Rectitude* of Moral Actions that we are enquiring after.

Our Author obſerves, as I before took notice, that *other ways of ſpeaking have been introduced*, which *ſeem to ſignify ſomething different* from the two oppoſite Opinions before-

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mentioned. And he concludes, that to render theſe intelligible, the *Moral Senſe* muſt be preſuppoſed. Theſe *Ways of ſpeaking*, as he calls them, are, * *That Morality of Actions conſiſts in Conformity to Reaſon, and Diſformity from it. That Virtue is acting according to the abſolute Fitneſs and Unfitneſs of Things; or agreeably to the Natures and Relations of Things. That there are eternal and immutable Differences of Things, abſolutely and antecedently; that there are alſo eternal and unalterable Relations in the Natures of the Things themſelves; from which ariſe Agreements and Diſagreements, Congruities and Incongruities, Fitneſs and Unfitneſs of the Application of Circumſtances to the Qualifications of Perſons,* &c. And here the Author refers us to that excellent, that ineſtimable Book, Dr. *S. Clarke's Boyle's Lectures*; from which, how it happen'd that a Perſon of his Diſcernment and Penetration roſe diſſatisfy'd, in relation to the Points before us, I am not able to imagine; unleſs I may have leave to attribute it to too cloſe an Attachment to the celebrated Author of the *Characteriſticks*.

To theſe ways of ſpeaking, might be added ſome others; as, that *Virtue conſiſts in the Conformity of our Wills to our Underſtand-*

* *Illuſtrations*, P. 207, 211.

ings.

ings. That it is *a Rational Endeavour of producing Happineſs in capable Subjects.* But ſince both theſe and the former appear to me coincident, and to center in the ſame Idea; I ſhall not examine them ſeverally, but content myſelf with laying down the Notion contained in them in the following *Definitions* and Explications. And this Method I therefore pitch upon, becauſe our Author has complained of the Darkneſs or Ambiguity of ſeveral of the Terms.

1. VIRTUE, *or Moral Goodneſs, is the Conformity of our Moral Actions to the Reaſons of Things.* VICE *the contrary.*

2. MORAL ACTIONS *are ſuch as are knowingly directed toward ſome Object intelligent or ſenſible.*——I do not add their ſpringing from free Choice; becauſe without this they could not really be Actions.——To treat or uſe an inſenſible Object conformably to Reaſon, or according to what it is, tho' it may be a *right* Action, yet is indifferent in reſpect of *Morality*; which only concerns our Behaviour to ſuch Beings as are, at leaſt, *ſenſible*. But as I exclude not here Beings merely ſenſible, ſo neither do I exclude the Agent himſelf. To promote his own real Welfare, in ſubordination to that of the Public, is, in its Kind, true Virtue.

3. The CONFORMITY *of ſuch Actions* to REASON, *or the* RECTITUDE *of them, is their Agree-*

Agreeableneſs to the Natures and Circumſtances of the Agents and the Objects.——A *ſocial* Action is then *right*, when it is ſuitable to the Nature and Relations of the Perſons concerned. Thus a Perſon obliged acts *rightly* and *reaſonably*, when his Actions are anſwerable to the Relation of Gratitude between him and his Benefactor.

4. RELATIONS *between Things, or Perſons, are their comparative States or Modes of Exiſtence, neceſſarily ariſing from their different Natures or Circumſtances.*——Whether Relations be *Qualities inherent in external Natures*, or not; or however they may be defined, or conceived; they are certainly real, unalterable, and eternal. That is, ſuppoſing thoſe Natures always continuing to be what they are, the Relations interceding between them are invariable. However, the Relations between *Ideas* are ſtrictly neceſſary and unchangeable; the Ideas themſelves being ſo, in the Divine Underſtanding.

5. OBLIGATION may be conſidered as either *external*, or *internal*. Of *external*, which ariſes from juſt Authority, I have no occaſion to ſpeak.——INTERNAL OBLIGATION *is a State of the Mind into which it is brought by the Perception of a plain Reaſon for acting, or forbearing to act, ariſing from the Nature, Circumſtances, or Relations of Perſons or Things.*——The internal Reaſons

of Things are the ſupreme * Law; inducing the ſtrongeſt Obligation, and affecting † all intelligent Beings. Tho' we are certainly obliged to do whatever appears to be the Will of God, merely becauſe it is his Will, and in conſequence of that Right which He has to preſcribe Laws to us; yet our Obligation to act conformably to Reaſon is even ſuperior to this; becauſe the Divine Will itſelf is eternally ſubject to this original Law, or Rule of Action.— To ſuppoſe Reaſonable Beings unconcerned with the Reaſons of Things, is to ſuppoſe them reaſonable and unreaſonable at the ſame time. The Reaſons of Things are to Men, in reſpect of Practice, what Evidence is in Speculation. Aſſent in one caſe, and Approbation in the other, are equally and irreſiſtably gained: only there is this difference, that the Will has power to rebel, and the Underſtanding has not. But whenever the Will does rebel, the immediate Conſequence is an odious Perception of Wrong, and a Conſciouſneſs of Guilt; which may be looked upon as natural Sanctions of the Law of Nature.

6. REASON, or *Intelligence, is a Faculty enabling us to perceive, either immediately or*

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* Πλὴν τὸ βέλτιςον φαινόμενον ἕςω σοι νόμος ἀπαράβατος. Epictet. Cap. 75.

Lex nihil eſt aliud niſi recta——ratio. Cic. Philip. II.

† *Æternum quiddam quod univerſum mundum regeret imperandi prohibendique ſapientia.* Cic. de Leg. Lib. 2.

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mediately, the Agreement or Diſagreement of Ideas, whether Natural or Moral.—This laſt Clauſe, otherwiſe ſuperfluous, is inſerted upon our Author's account; who ſeems to exclude *Moral Ideas*, and to conſider them as Objects of another Faculty. And indeed if he had thought our Underſtandings capable of Moral Perceptions, he would have had no occaſion for introducing his *Moral Senſe*; except in relation to the το καλὸν, concerning which, I have already acknowledged myſelf undetermined. But it is viſible, that he aſcribes our Perceptions of the *Rectitude* of Virtuous Actions to this *Moral Senſe*; or rather makes that Rectitude entirely conſiſt in their Correſpondence with it. Whereas if there be a real Rectitude in ſuch Actions, I cannot doubt but our Underſtandings are capable of perceiving it. We have confeſſedly Ideas of Actions and Agents, and find a manifeſt difference among them. We find likewiſe that ſome Actions are agreeable, others diſagreeable to the Nature and Circumſtances of the Agent, and the Object, and the Relations interceding between them. Thus for inſtance, we find an Agreement between the Gratitude of *A*, and the Kindneſs of *B*; and a Diſagreement between the Ingratitude of *C*, and the Bounty of *D*. Theſe Agreements and Diſagreements are viſible to every intelligent Obſerver, who attends to the ſeveral Ideas. The Queſtion then is, whether we perceive them by our *Underſtanding*, or by what our

Author calls a *Moral Senſe.* And might it not as well be asked, how it is that we perceive the Agreement between the three Angles of a Triangle, and two right ones? Will our Author ſay, that we perceive this by an *Intellectual Senſe* ſuperadded to our Underſtanding? I believe he will not. Why then does he aſcribe the other Perceptions to a *Moral* one? If * the Agreement or Diſagreement of one ſort of Ideas be proper Objects of our Underſtandings, why not thoſe of another? Eſpecially ſince, in many caſes, they are perceived with equal Clearneſs and Evidence. Let therefore our intelligent Faculty either be pronounced inſufficient in both caſes, or in neither. Nay, ſince Moral Perceptions are more uſeful and important than any other, there is peculiar Reaſon to conclude, that they belong to our ſupreme Faculty. It is not to be imagined, that the wiſe Author of Nature would frame our Minds in ſuch a manner, as to allot them only *Inſtincts* for the Purpoſes of Morality and Virtue, and at the ſame time grant them *Reaſon* and Intelligence for inferior Uſes. This ſeems to me neither conſiſtent with the Dignity of Virtue, nor the Supremacy of our Rational Faculty.

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* *Nam ut vera & falſa ſua ſponte, non aliena, judicantur; ſic conſtans & perpetua ratio vitæ, quæ eſt virtus——ſua natura probatur.* Cic. de Leg. Lib. 1.

7. TRUTH, objectively conſider'd, is either of *Words*, *Ideas*, or *Things*. By which laſt I mean external Natures. VERBAL *Truth, or the Truth of Propoſitions is their Conformity to one or both of the other two.* IDEAL *Truth is the Agreement or Diſagreement of Ideas. Truth of* THINGS *is the relative Nature of Things themſelves, or the Agreement or Diſagreement of one thing with another.*—That *Ideas* correſpond or differ, agree or diſagree with each other, will readily be allowed; whether ſuch Agreements or Diſagreements be formed into Propoſitions or no. The Differences among them conſtitute various Relations, which are fixed and certain, independantly of our Obſervation.—In like manner *external Natures*, in virtue of their eſſential or circumſtantial Differences, abound in real Relations to one another, independantly of Propoſitions, and in ſome ſenſe, even of Ideas. The Things indeed themſelves could never have exiſted without a Mind, and antecedent Ideas. But when they are once brought into Exiſtence, and conſtituted in ſuch or ſuch a manner; thoſe Agreements or Diſagreements wherein Truth conſiſts, flow neceſſarily from their reſpective Conſtitutions; and by conſequence, neither depend on the Perceptions of intelligent Beings, nor on the Will of the Creator himſelf. A Cylindrical Body would be bigger than a Conical one, of the ſame Baſe and Height; and Spherical Particles fitter for Motion than An-

gular; whether any Beings perceiv'd it, or no.— There are alſo the ſame real Agreements and Diſagreements between Actions, Agents, and Objects, as any other Things. Some Actions are very different from, and even contrary to others. There is likewiſe a wide Difference between the Nature of Rational Creatures, and that of Brutes; and between the Nature of Brutes, and that of inanimate Things. They require therefore reſpectively a ſuitable Treatment. To treat *Men* in the ſame way we treat *Brutes*, and to treat *Brutes* in the ſame way we do *Stocks* and *Stones*, is manifeſtly as diſagreeable and diſſonant to the Natures of Things, as it would be to attempt the forming of an Angle with two Parallel Lines. I would not call ſuch a Conduct *acting a Lye*; becauſe that is confounding objective and ſubjective Truth, and introducing needleſs Perplexities. I would not call it a *Contradiction* to ſome true *Propoſition*; becauſe that neither comes up to the Caſe, nor is a way of ſpeaking ſtrictly proper. But I would call it a *Counteraction to the Truth, or real Natures of Things.*——From hence it appears, how far, and with what Propriety a *morally good* Action may be ſaid to be *conformable to Truth*, or to *conſiſt in ſuch a Conformity.* If by Truth be meant the *Truth of Things*, then I think it may properly be ſaid, that the Moral Goodneſs of an Action conſiſts in a Conformity thereto. It may therefore be called either a *true* or a

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right Action; tho' for Diſtinction ſake, and the avoiding of Ambiguity and Confuſion, I ſhould conſtantly prefer the latter. However, ſince this *Truth of Things* is, in *Morals*, the Standard and Meaſure of *true Propoſitions*; which are no otherwiſe true, than as they agree with it; it is evidently more proper to repreſent Moral Goodneſs as founded on the former, rather than the latter.——If it be asked, why it is not as proper to found it on *Ideal Truth*, as the *Truth of Things*; I anſwer, that in reſpect of *Divine Ideas*, it is the very ſame; all things being created and framed according to thoſe Models. But tho' external Natures are only *Copies* of the Divine Ideas, yet in reſpect of ours, they are *Originals*; ſince our Ideas are all taken from them, as far as Morality is concerned. It is true indeed in *Mathematicks*, our Ideas themſelves are the Standards; Nature ſupplying no Figures ſo exact as that Science requires. But in *Morals*, our Ideas are only Repreſentations of Natures and Relations actually exiſting. As far as our Ideas are conformable thereto, ſo far they are juſt. But we cannot in all Inſtances be abſolutely ſecure that they are ſo. In ſome nicer Caſes we may miſapprehend the States and Circumſtances of Moral Agents, and the Relations between them. In ſtrictneſs therefore, the Foundations of Morality muſt be laid either in the Truth or Nature of Things themſelves, or in the Divine Ideas, which comes to the ſame thing.

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Nevertheleſs, in ordinary Caſes, we may ſecurely rely on our own Perceptions; the Objects of which, even in Morals, are often ſelf-evident Truths; and almoſt always reſolvable into ſuch. The Reaſons of Things, and the Relations between Moral Agents, ſeldom fail of appearing to us in a clear Light. And that, as I before obſerved, without the help of an additional Faculty. For the moſt part, we perceive and *underſtand* what is *right*, and what is *wrong*, in *Actions*; as plainly and diſtinctly, as we underſtand what is *true*, and what is falſe, in *Propoſitions*. And both conſiſt in the Relations diſcoverable between our Ideas. So that we have all the Grounds that can be, to conclude them equally Objects of *Intelligence*.——To give Pain, without cauſe, to a ſenſible Creature, is an Action ſelf-evidently *wrong*; as being directly repugnant to the Nature of the Object, and the Circumſtances of the Agent. The Iniquity of it is as manifeſt to every Underſtanding, as the Difference between a Curve and a ſtreight Line. We are certainly informed by our Senſes, that *Pain* is a Natural *Evil*. Here is therefore a plain and perpetual Reaſon againſt the Infliction of it, when no ſtronger intervenes to make it requiſite.——In like manner we certainly know that *Pleaſure* is a Natural *Good*. Here is therefore a plain and perpetual Reaſon for the Production of it, whenever we have it in our power, and are not hinder'd by a ſtronger.

——Are

—Are then theſe Things, ſtrictly ſpeaking, *unintelligible?* Is it entirely owing to one Inſtinct, that we are guided by ſuch Rules; and to another that we approve of them? Upon the whole, if we really have ſuch a Faculty as Underſtanding, and its proper Object be Truth; we need not doubt but it is capable of diſcerning Moral Rectitude: ſince this is entirely founded upon Truth, and ultimately conſiſts in an Agreement with it.

If it be objected to this Account of Virtue, that ſo ſmall a Regard is had in it to *Affections* and *Temper*; my Anſwer is, that tho' I grant the Reality of ſuch Affections, and the *Uſefulneſs* of them, in reſpect of Human Nature; yet I can by no means look upon them as *eſſential* to Virtue. Nor can I think that any *Inſtinct* has a place in its Conſtitution. To ſpeak properly, Reaſon was not given us to regulate Natural Affection; but Natural Affection was given us to reinforce Reaſon, and make it more prevalent. The inferior Principle muſt be intended as ſubſervient to th eſuperior, and not *vice verſa*. Let Affection be allowed, if you will, antecedent in Order of Time. I neither know, nor enquire, how far in Point of Uſe and Exerciſe, it may get the ſtart of Reaſon and Reflection. This will neither give it Pre-eminence, nor make it equal in Dignity. Senſe and Memory are prior to the Uſe of Judgment; but ſtill are inferior Principles.——A benevolent Inſtinct is a very

proper Introduction to Virtue. It may lead us, as it were by the hand, till we arrive at a Conduct truly virtuous, and that is founded on Rational Principles. And even afterwards it may continue to quicken us in our Purſuits. But yet, as far as our Wills are determined, either by Inſtinct, or any thing elſe beſides Reaſon, ſo far, I think, we can have no Pretenſion to Merit or Moral Goodneſs. However, as Inſtinct has a Tendency to produce Moral Good, ſo it actually produces a great Share of Natural Good. Doubtleſs a great Proportion of the Benefits and good Offices that are done in the World, are to be aſcribed to Natural Affection, either wholly or chiefly. And tho' this be no Proof of the Prevalence of true Virtue among Mankind, but rather an Argument of the contrary; yet moſt certainly it is a ſignal Inſtance of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the Creator, in providing ſuch a wonderful Supply both for our Natural Wants, and our Moral Defects.—But other and larger Conceſſions are to be made in Behalf of *Affection*, tho' of a different Kind from that of *Inſtinct*.

It ſeems to me an uſeful and material Diſtinction, to conſider the *Affection of Benevolence*, either as *inſtinctive*, or as *rational*; as natural, or as acquired. Acquired I mean by Reaſon, Reflection, and a conſequent Practice. If we attend to the Reaſons on which Moral Goodneſs is founded, we diſcover its Rectitude

tude and intrinſic Fitneſs. Why then may not this very Perception produce benevolent Affection, or a real Deſire of Public Good? And this Deſire continue prompting Men to generous Purſuits, and be ſtrengthened by ſuitable Practice? Is not ſuch a *Rational Benevolence* more agreeable to Rational Natures, and more meritorious, than a blind *Inſtinct* that we have in common with inferior Creatures; and which operates, as it were, mechanically, both on their Minds, and ours? I have already granted that we could not, without great Inconvenience, have wanted ſuch an Impulſe, and that great and good Effects are produced by it. I have alſo granted, that a natural Biaſs was proper to draw us into the right Path, and to prevent our being led aſtray during the Infancy of our Reaſon. But ſtill I muſt maintain, that this Impulſe, or Biaſs, is not Virtue; nor can any thing be Virtue, but what conſiſts in a Rational Determination of the Mind. As our Fellow-Creatures are a proper Object of a *Natural* Affection, ſo are they a proper Object of a *Rational* one. And as *that* is good and uſeful, *this* is laudable, and truly Virtuous.——It cannot, I think, be denied, but that *calm univerſal Benevolence*, in Praiſe and Preference of which our Author often ſpeaks, is more owing to Reaſon and Reflection, than natural Inſtinct, where-ever it appears. And ſuppoſing us naturally void of Public Affection, I doubt not but Reaſon and Reflection

would raiſe ſuch a Benevolence as this, in conſiderate Minds.— I ſhall only add, that tho' an *Inſtinctive* and a *Rational* Benevolence may make the ſame amiable Appearance in the Eyes of Men, who cannot indeed diſtinguiſh them in any Minds but their own; yet in the ſight of the Deity, I doubt not but the latter is much more acceptable and meritorious.

Again, if Virtue muſt be derived from ſome *Affection*, why not that Affection, of which *Reaſon* itſelf is the *Object?* And here again, I mean no *inſtinctive Determination* of the Mind. As I ſpoke before of a *Rational Benevolence*, of which Mankind is the Object; ſo here I ſpeak of a *Rational Love of Complacency*, the Object of which is Reaſon or Moral Goodneſs itſelf. Whatever is good, abſolutely good, will produce the Affection either of Complacency, or * Deſire, in ſuch Beings as are capable and willing to attend to its Excellence. Virtue † then, or Moral Rectitude being good in this Senſe, will not fail to recommend itſelf to all Rational Minds that duly conſider it. The *Congruity* between the *Object* and the *Faculty* is not arbitrary, as in other Caſes; but neceſſary and unchangeable.

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* *Omne honeſtum ſua ſponte eſt expetendum.* Cic. de Leg. l. 1.

† *Quæ ſi oculis cerneretur, mirabiles amores excitaret ſui.* Id. de Off. Lib. 1.

Placet ſuapte Natura——Virtus. Sen. de Benef. Lib. 4.

—As

—As to the *Beauty* of Virtue, that is a further Charm; as the *Pleaſure* attending the Perception of it is an additional Recommendation. Whether theſe, eſpecially the latter of them, belong not to ſome other Faculty than that of Intelligence, I leave to be enquired and determined by others. What I contend for at preſent, is, that without regarding, or thinking of the Pleaſure it may yield; we eſteem Virtue or Moral Rectitude upon its own account: that our *Affection* for it, is not an *inſtinctive* Determination, but raiſed and produced in the Mind, by the intrinſic Worth and Goodneſs of the Object. Moſt other Objects are therefore good, becauſe they are adapted to our Faculties, or our Faculties to them. But *Truth* and *Virtue* are good in themſelves, and neceſſarily appear ſo to all Beings capable of perceiving them. Their Excellence is not borrowed, or adventitious; but inherent, and eſſential. They reflect not a foreign Light, but ſhine, like the Sun, with their own proper Rays, and native Luſtre.

Our Author, in his * *Nature and Conduct of the Paſſions*, makes mention of a *Rational Deſire*; and takes notice of *ſuch Affections as ſeem to ariſe neceſſarily from a Rational Apprehenſion of Good or Evil.* I cannot avoid thinking, that he would have done more

* Page 62, 64.

Juſtice both to Virtue, and Human Nature; if he had laid more ſtreſs upon ſuch Affections as theſe, and leſs upon Inſtincts. He * grants (ſpeaking of Virtue) that *the lovely Form never fails to raiſe Deſire, as ſoon as it appears.* But this *Deſire*, according to his Notion, is only an *inſtinctive Affection*, ſuited and accommodated to its Object. And even this Object *Virtue* itſelf, which he calls a *lovely Form*, appears, I think, in *his* Repreſentation, far leſs lovely than it really is. For he has repreſented this *Lovelineſs*, not as abſolute, and neceſſarily inherent; but as factitious and communicated. According to him, ſuppoſe but the *Moral Senſe* inverted, and then *Vice*, as we now call it, becomes the *lovely Form.* But ſurely this is a Miſrepreſentation of Virtue; the Excellence of which is not precarious, nor derived; but eſſential, abſolute, and independant.

But to return; the *Rational Affections* before mentioned ſpringing from ſo noble a Principle, and operating jointly upon the Mind, along with natural Propenſity, muſt needs conſtitute an excellent *Diſpoſition.* The beſt and moſt deſirable *Temper* in the World, muſt, I think, be that which conſiſts in a *Rational univerſal Benevolence*, and an habitual *Complacency in Virtue.* Whether ſuch Affections be conſider'd as grafted upon natural Benevo-

* Ibid. Page 105.

lence,

lence, or as distinct Principles co-operating with it; I venture to affirm, that the more any *Temper* is influenced by Reason and Reflection, the better and nobler Effects it will produce; and render the Possessor more amiable and more deserving.

But the great Difficulty, in our Author's apprehension, is yet behind. He wants to be informed what are the Motives, Inducements, or *exciting Reasons* for the *Choice* of Virtue; and what the *justifying Reasons* of our *Approbation* of it. He seems to think these Questions are not to be answer'd upon the Scheme I am defending. Let us then try whether this Difficulty be not surmountable without the Help of those *Instincts* which he has introduced for that purpose.——What is the *Reason exciting* a Man to the *Choice* of a Virtuous Action? I answer, his very *Approbation* of it is itself a *sufficient Reason*, whereever it is not over-ruled by another more powerful. What can be more just, what more natural, than *choosing* of a Thing that we *approve*; and even choosing it for that very Reason?——But why then do we *approve?* or what *justifies* our *Approbation* of it? I answer in one word, *Necessity*. The same Necessity which compels Men to *assent* to what is *true*, forces them to approve what is *right* and fit. And I cannot but wonder, that our Author should demand a Reason for the one, more than for the other. In both Cases the Mind

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neceſſarily acquieſces, without regarding or conſidering the Effects or Tendencies of either.

If it be needful to enlarge upon this Matter, or take a further View of it; we need only call to mind what was before obſerved; *viz.* that Virtue being intrinſically worthy and excellent, fails not to produce a real *Affection* for itſelf in all Minds that attentively conſider it. It not only makes itſelf *approved*, but *admired*; not only *admired*, but *loved*, by thoſe that contemplate it in a proper manner. And the better any one is acquainted with it by Contemplation and Practice, the more amiable it becomes, and the higher his Affection riſes. Is it then to be wonder'd, that Rational Beings ſhould *chooſe* what they *love*; or in other Words, embrace an *Object* of their *Affections*? Much leſs is it to be wonder'd in the preſent Caſe, where the peculiar Dignity and Excellence of the Object is confeſſed.——Our Author grants that * *all Affections juſtify themſelves*. What can this mean, but that they *juſtify* our *Approbation* and *Choice* of their reſpective Objects? If therefore it be true that we have, or may have, ſuch an *Affection for Virtue*, or Moral Goodneſs, as I have been ſpeaking of; we ſhall need to ſeek no further, either for *Excitements to Election*, or Grounds of Approbation. Whether this *Affection* be

* Vol. I. Page 152.

looked

looked upon as *natural*, or *adventitious*; it will abundantly juſtify itſelf, and all the Regards that may be ſhewn for its Object.

But our Author tells us *, that *in every calm Rational Action, ſome* END *is deſired or intended.* And accordingly he expects to hear, what is the *End* which a Man propoſes in the *Choice of Virtue*, upon the preſent Scheme. He affirms that *under Benevolence, Self-love*, and their Oppoſites, *all Affections are included*; and concludes from thence, that there can be *no exciting Reaſon* but what ariſes from ſome or other of them.— Before I examine this Objection, I deſire to know whether that *Eſteem, Admiration, Complacency* which Virtue produces, be no *Affection*; and whatever they may be called, whether they may not *excite to Election?* Is Virtue no otherwiſe good, or amiable, than as it conduces to public or private Advantage? Is there no *abſolute* Goodneſs in it? Are all its Perfections *relative*, and inſtrumental? Have we no other Idea of the *Honeſtum* and the *Pulchrum* but this? Is the *lovely Form* to be conſider'd only as a kind of *Cornucopia?*

But to return, our Author's Queſtion amounts plainly to this; What does a *reaſonable* Creature propoſe in *acting reaſonably?* Or what is it that induces his *Will* to take Counſel of

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* Vol. II. Page 216.

his

his *Underſtanding?* As if this were not the very Eſſence of a Rational Action! The Queſtion therefore might as well have been put thus; What is it that induces a Man to be a Rational Agent, when he has it in his power to be otherwiſe? Beſides the *internal Reaſons* which I am ſpeaking of, there are indeed likewiſe *external Reaſons*; if Conſiderations of Intereſt may properly be called ſo. Call them what we will, they muſt and will be regarded by ſuch Creatures as Men. But, clamorous and importunate as they are, they leave us at liberty, in moſt caſes, to attend to thoſe *internal Reaſons* which I have been conſidering. The *Still Voice* of Conſcience may generally be heard amidſt all the Buſtle and Tumult of our Appetites and Paſſions.——But to come to the Point, if by the *End* which our Author enquires after, he means nothing but ſome Advantage, or *Natural Good*; my Anſwer is, that we may chuſe Reaſonable or Virtuous Actions without Intention or View of any ſuch *End.* But if I may be allowed to take the word in another Signification, then I anſwer as follows.——The *End* of Rational Actions, and Rational Agents, conſider'd as ſuch, is *Reaſon* or *Moral Good.* As this is the proper *Object* of our *Moral Capacity*, and the *Affection* correſponding thereto; it may properly be ſaid to be our *End* as *Moral Agents.* This Affection, like others, reaches out to its proper *Object*, and reſts in the Poſſeſſion of it, as its true

true *End*; whether it be, or be not connected with Happineſs. The End of the Speculatiſt is *Truth*; whether it redound to his Advantage, or his Diſadvantage. The End of the Moraliſt is *Rectitude*; whether it conduce to his Intereſt or no. Conſidered as * *Moral*, this is preciſely the Mark that he aims at; his Judgment directing, and his Affection prompting to this *Object* as, in a peculiar Senſe, Self-worthy, and Self-eligible. In ſhort, *Moral Good* is an *End*, an *ultimate End* of one kind; as *Natural Good* is of another. And theſe Ends are ſo cloſely united and interwoven, that it is ſometimes difficult to ſeparate them even in our Conceptions. In the purſuit of *Pleaſure*, we have often the Conſent and Concurrence of *Reaſon*; and when we purſue *Reaſon* or *Virtue*, *Pleaſure* accompanies and follows. If we propoſe to make ourſelves happy, we have Reaſon on our ſide; and if we determine to act reaſonably, Pleaſure is the Conſequence.—Nevertheleſs they are, in themſelves, diſtinct Objects, and diſtinct Ends. However *Pleaſure* may be the Conſequence or Appendage of *Virtue*, yet ſtrictly ſpeaking, it is not the *End* of a Moral Agent, nor the *Object* of a Moral Affection; but *Virtue* alone, antecedent to all Conſiderations, and abſtracted from every Natural Good.——As Man is a *ſenſible* Creature, as

* Μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ προσέχων ἢ τῷ λόγῳ. Epictet. ibid.

well as *Moral*, I deny not but certain Circumſtances may be ſuppoſed, wherein, theſe *Ends* interfering, the *Moral* Good would certainly be poſtponed to the *Natural*; and the *external Reaſons* unavoidably prevail over the *internal*. But ſuch Caſes can never come into Fact, and therefore need not be regarded. As God has framed our Natures in ſuch a manner, as makes it neceſſary for us to approve and purſue both theſe *Ends*, we may infallibly conclude, that he does not intend to ſuffer them finally to interfere.

If our Author denies that any *Affection* can have ſuch an *Object*, or ſuch an *End*, as is not advantageous or *naturally good*; I muſt refer him to an Obſervation of his own. He himſelf produces * a remarkable Inſtance of an *Affection* continuing in purſuit of its *Object*, when known to be utterly uſeleſs, and incapable of contributing in any degree to the Advantage of the Purſuer. The Object I ſpeak of is *Future Fame*, which he ſuppoſes would be deſired even at the Point of Annihilation. Should he here be asked for an *exciting Reaſon*, he would anſwer *Affection*; or for a *juſtifying Reaſon*, he would ſtill anſwer *Affection*; *all Affections juſtifying themſelves*. I wiſh then he would tell us, why, abſtracting all other Motives, *Affection* may not *excite* us

* Vol. II. Page 24.

to

to chuſe *Virtue* as well as *Fame*; and, at leaſt, equally *juſtify* the Choice.——By the *abſolute Fitneſs* of Virtue, which appears ſo unintelligible to our Author; no more is meant, than that * *inherent Goodneſs*, that *Self-Worth*, which renders it *fit* to be choſen, purſued, practiſed, loved by every Rational Being. As *Truth* is *abſolutely fit* to be aſſented to; ſo *Virtue* which is founded on Truth, is *abſolutely fit* to be approved and practiſed.

I would further obſerve, that *Virtue* in this View, is no leſs *diſintereſted*, than in that of our Author's. As he does not allow, that the Pleaſure which attends *benevolent Actions*, makes them intereſted; becauſe the Agent is not excited or influenced by it; ſo neither can I allow, that the *Love of Virtue* is intereſted; whatever Pleaſure it may be attended with: foraſmuch as Pleaſure is no more the Motive, or Excitement, in this Caſe than in the other.—Both *Public Affection*, and the *Love of Virtue* gratify the Mind; but the Mind does not, or at leaſt needs not intend its own Gratification in either. Tho' they be Affections of a different kind, yet they are, or may be, equally generous and diſintereſted. Whatever Pleaſure Virtue may give in the Contemplation, or Practice; that Pleaſure is not the chief or

* *Nam eſt quiddam quod ſua vi nos alliciat ad ſeſe, non emolumento captans aliquo, ſed trahens ſua dignitate; quod genus, virtus, ſcientia, veritas eſt.* Cic. de Invent.

primary Reaſon of our Approbation and Eſteem. We approve and eſteem it for its own intrinſic Worth, antecedently to every other Conſideration.—I ſhall only obſerve further, that as, in Fact, we often purſue ſpeculative Truths without ſo much as thinking of any Intereſt; and when we have found them, acquieſce in them: So * good Men often propoſe and undertake good Actions, without thinking of any Advantage or Pleaſure at all. And when the Actions are ſocial, and directed to public Intereſt, yet ſtill the Love of Reaſon and Moral Rectitude is often the leading Principle. The Agents are beneficent and kind, in obedience to the Dictates of *Reaſon*.

While we act up to the Character of Rational Agents, we ſhall be ſure to follow *Reaſon*; whether it call us out in queſt of public, or private Good. *Reaſon* is the perpetual Arbitreſs of our ſeveral Claims and Pretenſions; will inform us what we are to do for others, and what for ourſelves; prevent the interfering of public and private Intereſt, and adjuſt all imaginary Differences and Competitions between them. *Reaſon* may be conſider'd as Paramount and Superior to every Intereſt, even that of the Public; however it may decide in favour thereof. It would be improper and abſurd to ſay,

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* *Optimi quique permulta ob eam unam Cauſam faciunt, quia decet, quia rectum, quia honeſtum eſt; etſi nullum conſecuturum emolumentum vident.* Cic. de Fin. Lib. 2.

that

that we hearken to Reaſon for the ſake of our Fellow-Creatures; but it is very juſt and proper to ſay, that we oblige and ſerve our Fellow-Creatures, becauſe Reaſon requires it. Reaſon both enjoins the Duty, and preſcribes the Meaſures of it.

It is manifeſt that Reaſon has placed every private Intereſt in ſubordination to public. And if Caſes may be imagined, where this Order is inverted; it is certain that ſuch Caſes can never actually happen; and therefore it is needleſs to take notice of them. Were the World without a *Governor*, or without a Governor of infinite Wiſdom and Perfection; the Nature and Circumſtances of Mankind would be a Scene of mere Diſorder and Confuſion. They would be frequently diſtracted between oppoſite and contradictory Obligations. Since we are *Senſible* as well as *Rational* Creatures, Reaſon alone can never be *Self-ſufficient*, tho' it may be, and is *Self-eligible*. Exclude the Belief of Providence, and a Future State, and in many caſes, it muſt be owned, Virtue would not be able to ſupport itſelf. Adverſity and great Miſery would make Men deaf to the Dictates of their own Minds; would bring them down, as it were, from Reaſon to Senſe; as the extreme Anguiſh and Torture of ſome Diſtempers have forced Men to quit their erect Poſture, and crawl upon the Ground.

But

But tho' this be a ſtrong Argument for a Future State, it is none againſt the Dignity of Virtue, or the Supremacy of a Rational Principle. There can never be, in Fact, a Neceſſity for oppoſing this, or departing from it; whatever there may be in Suppoſition, or Speculation. However therefore Men may happen to counter-act their preſent Intereſt, it is unqueſtionably their Duty to follow whereever Reaſon and Virtue lead them. He who formed them Reaſonable Creatures, and thereby unavoidably ſubjected them to the Dictates of Reaſon; will aſſuredly take care that they be not finally Sufferers by their adherence thereto. He will make abundant Compenſation for every Loſs, and every Diſadvantage hereby occaſioned. To imagine otherwiſe, is, in effect, to ſuppoſe Inconſiſtency and Contrariety in the very Frame of our Nature.

I know not whether I need to obſerve, that our Author ever ſeems to take it for granted there is no *abſolute* Good but *Natural Good*; and that *Moral Good* is no otherwiſe ſuch, than as it is ſubſervient and conducive to *Natural Good*. On the contrary I affirm and maintain, that tho' *Moral Good* greatly promotes *Natural Good*, it is moreover in itſelf an *abſolute Good*. What Proof can we give of the *abſolute* Goodneſs of *Pleaſure*, but that we approve of it upon its own account, and purſue it for its own ſake? The ſame Proof

we

we have of the *abſolute* Goodneſs of *Virtue*; which conſider'd by itſelf, and abſtracted from every other thing, neceſſarily extorts our Approbation, and appears worthy of our Choice. Our approving and admiring it antecedently to thoſe Satisfactions which flow from it, is an undeniable Proof of its abſolute and inherent Worth. —— And as *Virtue* is abſolute Good as well as *Pleaſure*, ſo that it is of a different and ſuperior kind, evidently appears from this ſingle Conſideration; that whereas *Natural Objects* are only therefore good becauſe they gratify; *Moral Objects* therefore gratify becauſe they are good. *Natural Good* is mere Gratification. In *Moral Good* there is Gratification likewiſe, and that of the beſt and nobleſt kind; but it is the Conſequence of original and eſſential Goodneſs. The Correſpondence or Congruity between Natural Objects and their Faculties, is arbitrary and mutable; between Moral Objects and their Faculties, neceſſary and immutable.

Of this Sentiment of our Author which I laſt mentioned, the Opinion of the *Stoics* ſeems to have been the reverſe. They had noble Ideas of Virtue, and clear Apprehenſions of its Excellence; but unaccountably forgot, or overlooked the Conſtitution of Human Nature. And hence they fell into great Extravagance, and a kind of Enthuſiaſm. Wrapt up in Admiration of *Moral Good*, they ſeemed

not

not to acknowledge or regard any other. Had they conſider'd that they were *Senſible* Beings as well as *Moral*, they could not eaſily have imagined that *Virtue* alone was *Self-ſufficient*. Their Scheme therefore muſt be unnatural and indefenſible; I mean excluſively of a Future State, the only Support of Virtue in Adverſity and extreme Caſes.

But to return; our Author lays it down, that * *no Reaſon can excite to Action previouſly to ſome End.* To which I anſwer, that if *Reaſon* or *Virtue* were not itſelf an *End* to a Moral Agent, in the manner explained above; it would ſtill follow, that there might be a *Reaſon exciting to Action* without an *End.* Our *Approbation* of Virtue, and *Affection* for it, would certainly be *ſuch a Reaſon.* That which is neceſſarily *approved* and *beloved* upon its own account, *may* undoubtedly be choſen without any additional Motive. Tho' our Approbation of Virtue be neceſſary, yet that Neceſſity is only a Conſequence of the intrinſic Goodneſs and Excellence of Virtue. Virtue is therefore worthy of that Approbation which it gains; and if worthy of our Approbation, why not of our Choice? Why ſhould not that Worth which makes us neceſſarily approve of it in

* Vol. II. Page 286, *and elſewhere.*

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Speculation, recommend it to our Practice? Why ſhould we not freely conform our *Actions* to our *Judgments?* If we plainly perceive that a Thing is *right* and *fit* to be done, and yet refuſe to do it without further *Excitements*, do we not juſtly incur the double Imputation of Unreaſonableneſs and Intereſtedneſs? If *external Reaſons* be wanting, here is a ſtrong *internal one*; a Compliance with which is, if I miſtake not, the moſt perfect and moſt diſintereſted Virtue. I humbly preſume the Goodneſs of the Deity himſelf proceeds from this Principle, and reſts upon this Foundation. A perpetual Regard and Attachment to the *internal Reaſons* of Things is the utmoſt Perfection of a Moral Agent. Whether our Author will allow them to be *an End*, or *Excitements* without an End, muſt be left to his own Determination. But I think he muſt neceſſarily allow either the one or the other.

He adds, that *No End can be propoſed without ſome Inſtinct or Affection.* To which I anſwer, that it has been already acknowledged Moral Agents have and muſt have an *Affection* for Virtue. But why muſt this *Affection* be an *Inſtinct?* Whatever Reaſons there may be for an *Inſtinctive Benevolence*, I can ſee none for an *Inſtinctive Love of Virtue.* An Object that is and appears *Self-good*, or intrinſically excellent, muſt neceſſarily produce *Eſteem* and *Admiration* in all Minds capable of perceiving it. We find our Minds neceſſarily *determined* in favour of Virtue.

But I presume such a *Determination* is not antecedent, but consequent to our Perceptions of this amiable Object. Even the *Desire of Natural Good* seems to be in Reality no *Instinct*; tho' commonly called and reputed such. Our Affections indeed for particular Objects are manifestly *instinctive*; as it was requisite they should: but I see no need of supposing *a previous Determination* of the Mind either to *Natural* Good in general, or to *Moral*. As soon as either comes to be perceived, it necessarily determines the Mind towards itself. But this *Determination* being *consequent to Perception*, is, if I mistake not, improperly called *Instinct*. It is indeed *Affection*; but that Affection, I suppose, is *produced* in the Mind, not antecedently planted in it.

Our Author observes *, that if by *determining our selves freely*, we mean *acting, without any Motive or exciting Reason*, by *mere Election*; *such kind of Action* can never *gain* any one's *Approbation*. Now I readily grant there is *no Merit in acting without any Motive or Reason*. On the other hand it may be affirmed, that neither is there any *Merit in Actions* to which an Agent is driven by natural *Instinct*. The one of these is a worthless Use of Freedom; the other no Freedom at all. In the former case the Man acts, but to no purpose. In the latter he does not act, but is acted upon. Or however he is

* Vol. II. Page 286—7.

passive

paſſive in proportion to the Influence and Operation of the Inſtinct.——But *determining our ſelves freely* to act and do what appears conformable to *Reaſon*, is making the beſt Uſe of both Faculties that we poſſibly can. And if there be no *Merit* in ſuch a Conduct, we are capable of none. It is no Diminution of this Merit, that Virtue neceſſarily engages our Approbation, and attracts our Eſteem. If all Things were indifferent, and no *Reaſons* appeared to incline our Wills one way more than another, we ſhould have *Liberty* to no purpoſe. But ſurely there is a manifeſt and wide Difference between a *Rational Determination*, and a *mere Impulſe* of Nature. It is only *Reaſon*, or the Appearance of Reaſon, that can *juſtify* the *Choice* of a Moral Agent; who is no further *Praiſe-worthy*, than as he acts in Conformity thereto. *Inſtinctive Goodneſs* is the *Creator*'s Goodneſs, not the *Creature*'s; ſo far, I mean, as it proceeds from Inſtinct, and is owing thereto.

Let us ſuppoſe two Perſons equally producing any given Quantity of Beneficence, or Moment of Good; the one merely from a ſweet Diſpoſition, and a high Degree of Good-Nature; the other from Reaſon, Reflection, and Reſolution, without any ſuch good Natural Diſpoſition, or in oppoſition to a bad one; do I need to ask whether of theſe Characters is more meritorious and virtuous? The one ſteers his Courſe with the Advantage of a fair Wind, and a ſtrong Tide; the other works his

Way through a rough and ſtormy Sea, with great Care, Induſtry, and Application. They may appear perhaps equally amiable in the undiſtinguiſhing Eye of the World; but far otherwiſe in the ſight of Heaven.——In ſhort, I cannot have any other Idea of *Moral Merit*, than *conforming*, or endeavouring to conform *our Actions to the Reaſons of Things*. And this, I am perſuaded, is the real *Foundation* of all *Goodneſs* whether *Human* or *Divine*.

Our Author's Reaſonings, concerning this Matter, being all built on the Principles which I have already conſidered; it is needleſs to proceed to a more particular Examination of them.——Nor ſhall I trouble the Reader with a Train of Corollaries that might eaſily be deduced from the foregoing Account. But the two following ſeeming more material and important than the reſt, may deſerve, not only to be mentioned, but ſet forth particularly, and at large.

The one is, that *Virtue* may be *taught*, or promoted by Inſtruction; in oppoſition to our Author, who * denies it: Agreeably enough, I confeſs, to his own Principles, which naturally lead him to ſuch a Concluſion. For if Virtue conſiſt in an *Inſtinct*, and the Effects of that Inſtinct, it is evident that Inſtruction can avail little or nothing. But if, according to the foregoing Account, Virtue conſiſt in the *Conformity* of Men's Actions to the *Reaſons of Things*; the Advantage of Moral In-

* Vol. II. Page 276, *and elſewhere*.

ſtruction

ſtruction muſt be very manifeſt. For hereby the Ignorant may be aſſiſted in diſcovering and perceiving, which Actions are conformable, and which repugnant to the Nature and Circumſtances of Agents, and the Relations thence ariſing. In ordinary Caſes the Difference between *Right* and *Wrong* is ſo evident and notorious, that the moſt Ignorant perceive it without Inſtruction. And yet even in theſe Caſes, it may be very uſeful, as it is very practicable, to ſhew more particularly and diſtinctly the Reaſonableneſs, the Fitneſs, and the Excellence of a Virtuous Practice; and the Unreaſonableneſs and Unfitneſs, the Odiouſneſs and Baſeneſs of a vicious Conduct. By theſe and other Topics properly inſiſted on, Men may acquire a Veneration for Virtue, and an Abhorrence of Vice. Good Diſpoſitions may be raiſed, or cheriſhed, in their Minds; and evil ones checked or rooted out.——And in reſpect of other Duties not ſelf-evident, their Connection with ſuch as are, may be diſcovered and laid open; or they may be unfolded and reſolved into ſimple Truths, and ſelf-evident Propoſitions.——And as the Ignorant may thus learn what their ſeveral Duties are, ſo they may be induced and prevailed upon to comply with them; not only by external Motives, but by internal Reaſons drawn from the Nature of Morality and Virtue. And ſurely it muſt turn to ſome Account, and tend to inſpire Men with right Sentiments and virtuous Purpoſes, to convince them how reaſonable

nable it is to do well, and how unreaſonable to do ill. Such Inſtruction muſt be uſeful to the Ignorant, and may contribute to reclaim the Vicious. It doubtleſs tends to produce ſuch an Effect. However, it muſt, I think, be allowed, that ſince Men are reaſonable Creatures, and Virtue the moſt reaſonable thing in the World; there can be no impoſſibility of reconciling, by Reaſon and Argument, the one to the other. Virtue therefore may be promoted by Inſtruction; or in other words, may be *properly taught*.

I cannot but obſerve, that * *amiable Conceptions of our Fellow-Creatures* are repreſented by our Author as neceſſary for the producing of Benevolence. † *Moral Goodneſs* muſt be diſcovered in them, in order to *raiſe* our *Love*. But does he not here confound the Affections of *Benevolence* and *Complacency*? Whether our *Fellow-Creatures* be amiable or unamiable, deſerving or undeſerving, they are *ſenſible*; and as ſuch, Objects of our *Benevolence*. Their very *Senſibility* is their Title, which holds good where there is nothing elſe to be pleaded in their behalf.——Here then is an Inſtance of the Benefit and Uſefulneſs of Inſtruction. Men are too apt to imagine that the Worthleſs and the Wicked have no Claim to their Regard. But they may be informed and convinced, that ſuch Objects have a Claim to their Benevolence, and can never forfeit it, till they become *inſenſible*. The

* Vol. II. Page 89, *and elſewhere.* † Page 276.

The other Conſequence of the foregoing Account is, that there may be real Virtue in ſuch Actions as reſpect the Agent himſelf, and are directed to his own Advantage. If Virtue conſiſt in *acting conformably to Reaſon*, and if *Reaſon* not only allows, but requires the Agent (as it certainly does) to regard his own Good, in ſubordination to that of the Public; it muſt needs follow that ſuch a Conduct is, or may be virtuous. On the contrary, our Author does not allow ſuch Actions to be virtuous, any otherwiſe than as they conduce to Public Good, and are directed thereto. Thus * *Temperance*, for inſtance, he grants to be laudable and virtuous under the foreſaid Reference, but not otherwiſe. In no other reſpect will he allow it to be *morally good*, however *naturally good*, *or advantageous to Health.*

But I preſume there is other Merit beſides this in the Diſcharge of what we may call Self-duties. Were any Man ſuppoſed *alone*, without any *Fellow-Creatures* in the Univerſe; would there be no Merit, no *Moral Goodneſs* in the higheſt Improvement of his Faculties, and the exacteſt Government of his Appetites and Inclinations? Tho' he conformed all his Actions to the Rules of Right Reaſon; checking every Deſire, and denying himſelf every Gratification inconſiſtent therewith; would there be nothing laudable, nothing meritorious in ſuch a Conduct as this? On the contrary, would it not be very

* Vol. I. Page 137.

acceptable to the Deity, and procure the Man his Approbation and Favour? Why then, and upon what account would it be thus acceptable? I ſuppoſe it will be anſwered, as the Man was hereby better fitted for the Diſcharge of thoſe Duties which were owing to his Maker. But ſurely it muſt be granted, that his Maker would be incapable of receiving the leaſt Benefit from ſuch a Conduct. What Advantage therefore, or *Natural Good* the Man propoſed, muſt terminate in himſelf, and be directed accordingly. But prior to this View muſt be ſuppoſed his Regard to *Moral Good*. Thoſe Acts of Praiſe, Adoration, and Thankſgiving which were offered by him to the Creator, muſt primarily and immediately flow from a Regard to the *intrinſic Reaſon and Rectitude* of the Thing, which is *Moral Good*; and ſecondarily (as Reaſon permits and preſcribes) to his *own Advantage*, or *Natural Good*; which indeed would be all the Natural Good that he could have in view. Such a Homage and ſuch a Deference paid to that *Sacred Law* of *Eternal Truth and Rectitude*, which obliges even the Deity himſelf, and whoſe *Will* therefore it muſt be; is the trueſt Glory that can be given by a Creature to the Creator. It may be looked upon not only as a Submiſſion to the *Divine Will*, but as a Conformity to the *Divine Underſtanding*; on the Agreement of which is founded that Goodneſs which is infinitely perfect.

But to return to the Suppoſition of the Solitary Agent; if he only aimed at that *Self-Good* to which

which *Reaſon* directed, and purſued it by the moſt reaſonable and laudable Means; what could be wanting to denominate and conſtitute ſuch a Behaviour truly virtuous? If neglecting the Care aud Culture of his Mind, he gave himſelf up to ſenſual Pleaſure, and ſubjected his Reaſon to his Appetites; as he muſt renounce all Pretenſion to Virtue, ſo he would groſly neglect his own Intereſt. But as he is ſuppoſed to take a quite contrary Method; he muſt either be reputed Virtuous, or pronounced incapable of Virtue.——And as a due Performance of the Self-Duties would be laudable and virtuous upon ſuch a Suppoſition, ſo is it without the Suppoſition; tho' differently circumſtanced. The Coexiſtence of innumerable Fellow-Creatures makes room for other Duties, and another kind of Virtue; but does not cancel the Obligation we are ſpeaking of, nor extinguiſh the Merit and Moral Rectitude of ſuch Actions as reſpect ourſelves.

The primary Dictate of *Right Reaſon* is, that every Moral Agent *intend the Good of the Whole*, or *aim at Univerſal Good*. In this Univerſal Good the private Good of every Individual is included. From hence it follows, that if any Agent in the View and Purſuit of common Good, could be ſuppoſed to exclude his own; ſuch an Intention and ſuch a Conduct would be leſs Virtuous than if he had included it. It muſt therefore be granted, that for any Man to aim at his own Welfare, in Subordination to that of the Publick, is not only innocent, but morally good.——But tho' ſuch Self-Views

as theſe are perfectly *right* and *reaſonable* in themſelves; yet the Queſtion is, how they are affected by the Circumſtances of the Agent. Tho' it be at leaſt as reaſonable to conſult his own Good, as that of any other Individual; yet it muſt be allowed that a good Office done to another appears generally more amiable, and even more virtuous, than a like Kindneſs done to himſelf. How then comes it to paſs that *Social* and *Self-Kindneſs* make ſuch a different Appearance? Is there ſome peculiar Grace and Beauty ſuperadded to our Perceptions of the former, by an *internal Senſe* implanted in our Minds for that Purpoſe?

However that be, the foreſaid Difference is eaſily accounted for. Our *Self-Affections* are ſo much ſtronger than *natural Benevolence*, and our *private Inſtincts* than *publick* ones; that the Regard ſhewn, and the Good done to our ſelves appear in a great Meaſure *neceſſary*. Conſidered in this Light they muſt needs ſeem leſs amiable, and leſs meritorious than Actions done merely, or chiefly, *in Conformity to Reaſon*. What I obſerved before of *Parental Kindneſs*, may be here applied to *Self-Love*; whether it be conſidered as an *Inſtinct*, or as a neceſſary Conſequence of experienced Good. But tho' this Circumſtance renders Self-kindneſs leſs amiable, and leſs meritorious; yet it does by no means ſet it upon a Level with Actions morally indifferent. And in ſome Caſes it leaves room for a Conduct highly Virtuous.— However uſeful our *Inſtincts* may be, when under the Direction of Reaſon, as Nature deſigned;

ſigned; yet they are very inſufficient Guides, of themſelves, for Human Nature; and in many Caſes would lead Men aſide from their true Intereſt, inſtead of bringing them to it. Conſider them as undirected by Reaſon, and we ſhall find that they prompt us to prefer a trivial Enjoyment that is preſent, to a very great one at a Diſtance. That they prompt us alſo to purſue ſenſual Gratifications to the Neglect of more refined Pleaſures, and ſublimer Enjoyments. Theſe *Inſtincts* therefore, ſtrong and powerful as they are, muſt be often reſtrained and reſiſted by the *Reaſon* of every Man who pretends to act either virtuouſly or wiſely. In many Caſes, inſtead of gratifying, he muſt oppoſe his keeneſt Appetites, and moſt urgent Inclinations, by a generous Self-denial. He muſt curb and keep in his eager Paſſions, leſt inſtead of being ſubſervient to a higher Principle, they run away with it. On theſe Accounts there is abundant room for the Exerciſe of *Self-Virtue*, notwithſtanding the Strength and Prevalence of *Self-Love*. Accordingly we find that ſuch a Conduct appears not only *reaſonable* and *right*, but *beautiful* and *lovely*; and that it is beheld by others with Pleaſure, as well as Approbation. To ſee a Man engaged in a reſolute ſtruggle with a froward Diſpoſition; to ſee him reſiſting a clamorous Appetite, or ſubduing a head-ſtrong Paſſion; cannot but be agreeable to intelligent Spectators, whether they regard his Actions in relation to Society, or no. And indeed were the Agent *alone* in the World, according to the foregoing Suppoſition, ſuch a Con-

Conduct would ſtill be amiable, ſtill meritorious. Thus, I think, it plainly appears, that aiming at private Welfare is not inconſiſtent with real Virtue; but when rightly circumſtantiated, productive of it.——I ſhall only add, that the greateſt *Self-Good* which a Man can poſſibly propoſe, is the *perpetual Enjoyment of Virtue.* Such an Aim will be allowed to be virtuous, as the Good aimed at is neceſſarily connected with publick Intereſt, or the Good of the Whole. And yet it is manifeſt in this Caſe, that private Advantage is a real Part of the Object deſired. Nevertheleſs this is ſo far from leſſening the Goodneſs of the Purſuit, that it increaſes it, as I before obſerved. To be influenced in our Conduct by the Proſpect of ſuch a *Reward,* can be no Diminution of our preſent Virtue; but is, on the contrary, an Addition to it.

Upon the Whole, our End and our Buſineſs, as Men and *Moral Agents*, is to purſue *Virtue*, leaving the Conſequence to our Maker; who as he has made us capable of *Truth*, *Virtue*, and *Happineſs*, will undoubtedly take care to make them finally compatible and coincident. So great is, or will be, the Harmony among them; that they may rather be looked upon as one and the ſame End, than as diſtinct and ſeveral. The Foundation of *Virtue*, is *Truth*; and the Foundation of *Happineſs*, *Virtue.*

F I N I S.